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# Poloncarz Warns Of New Telephone Scam

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By WKBW News  
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BUFFALO, NY—( RELEASE ) Today, Erie County Comptroller Mark Poloncarz warned of a telephone phishing scam currently targeting Erie County residents and even county employees.

Identity thieves are contacting potential victims to warn them that their bank account was supposedly compromised. Unlike typical phishing scams that use email, this one is initiated by a phone call, currently to the victim's mobile phone from a (732) area code.

Upon answering the call, an automated voice message announces that the victim's "Western New York Credit Union debit card has been deactivated" and to "reactivate or speak with security, please press #1 now."

The goal is to get the victim to call back a phone number and enter their bank account information.

"The scam works by warning you that your debit card has been deactivated and then urging you to provide your account information so that it can be reactivated," said Poloncarz. "People may fall for this scam because the automated message refers to the financial institution as being the 'Western New York Credit Union' and there in fact exists a highly respected local credit union with a similar name - WNY Federal Credit Union. This morning I spoke to Marie Betti, the local president of the WNY Federal Credit Union, to express my concerns and she confirmed the calls were not being sent out by their organization and they are warning their depositors to not fall for the scam. Considering the calls are being received by many county residents, regardless of whether they are a member of a credit union, it is important that all residents be aware of this scam and be vigilant to these scam artists."

Poloncarz then warned, “As soon as you are asked for any sensitive personal information, that’s when you should be suspicious and just hang up. Your bank or credit card company WILL NEVER call you and ask for your account information. It’s a scam. With this information, scammers can assume your identity and empty your bank accounts.”

Erie County residents are advised to report such solicitations to the Erie County Comptroller’s Whistleblower Hotline at (716) 858-7722, the New York State Attorney General’s office at (800) 771-7755 or the Federal Trade Commission at (877) 382-4357.

Poloncarz noted a number of telephone scam tips, including:

- Never provide your personal or account information or password in response to an unsolicited request. If you did not initiate the communication, you should not provide any information;
- Contact the company yourself. Ask the caller for their name, department and phone extension and then contact the company at the number you know to be correct to determine if the call is legitimate; and,
- Review account statements regularly to ensure all charges are correct. If your account statement is late in arriving, call to find out why. If you have Internet account access, periodically review activity online to catch suspicious activity.

If you believe you have given personal information to an illegitimate source, you should contact your financial institution and credit reporting agencies immediately and monitor your credit files and account statements closely.